

AN EXCELLENT FATHER

An "Excellent father" is an excerpt from a famous novel by Jane Austen 'Pride and Prejudice'. The important characters of this passage are Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Jane, Elizabeth and Mr. Bingley.

Mr. Bennet: - A gentleman, who lives with his wife and five daughters at Longbourne house. Mr. Bennet seldom shows anger; he prefers to laugh at people's weaknesses.

Mrs. Bennet: - Mr. Bennet's wife; a foolish, quick tempered woman. Her chief aim in life is to find rich husbands for her daughters.

Jane: - The eldest of the Bennet daughters and also the prettiest.

Elizabeth: - The second of the Bennet daughter. She is shrewder than Jane and is always ready to speak her mind.

Kitty: - The fourth of the Bennet daughters.

Charles Bingley: - A rich handsome, eligible and single gentleman.

Summary: This prose extract has been taken from Jane Austen's famous novel "Pride and prejudice" which after considerable revision appeared as "Pride and Prejudice" in 1813. This novel tells the story of the gradual union of two people - one held back by unconquerable pride and the other blinded by Prejudice - thus the name "Pride and Prejudice". Mr. Bennet seems to be a careless father who is not bothered about the marriage of his daughters who have attained a marriageable age. The chapter starts when Mr. Bingley rents Nether fields Park which is in the neighbourhood of Mr. Bennet's house. Mrs. Bennet becomes very cautious about her daughter because she does not want to lose this opportunity of marrying one of her daughters to Mr. Bingley.

Actually, this novel is written in 19th century when there was a custom that the property was taken over by only male members. Since Mr. Bennet had no son, so his property was to be owned by any of his close relative. That is why Mrs. Bennet was very much worried about the fate of her daughters. On hearing about the arrival of Mr. Bingley, she tells her husband to develop some familiarity with him. But he reacts very lightly to this news. He starts teasing his wife and comments that should send the girls to meet Mr. Bingley but should not go herself for she is very beautiful even in her old age. Finally, Mrs. Bennet gets very disappointed because of her husband's loose reaction. As a result of anger, she scolds her daughter Kitty for coughing. Ultimately, when she comes to know that her husband Mr. Bennet had visited Mr. Bingley, she feels relaxed and overwhelmed. At the end she told her daughters "You have an excellent father, girls" because she comes to know that Mr. Bennet had actually paid the visit to Mr. Bingley unbeknownst to all of them.

Thinking About the text

Q1. What does Mrs. Bennet tell her husband?

Ans: Mrs. Bennet tells her husband to visit Mr. Bingley, a rich young gentleman, who rent a house in their neighbourhood.

Q2. Who takes over Netherfield Park? Why is Mrs. Bennet happy about it?

Mr. Bingley, a rich, handsome and eligible young man of North of England takes over Netherfield Park. Mrs. Bennet is happy about it because Mr. Bingley is a bachelor and she looks forward for marrying one of her daughters to him.

Q3. Why does Mrs. Bennet insist her husband to meet Mr. Bingley?

Ans: Mrs. Bennet insists her husband to meet Mr. Bingley because she does not want to miss this golden opportunity of giving one of her daughters, a happy, prosperous life by marrying her to Mr. Bingley. Moreover, she is sure that many ladies would try to exploit this chance. So she tries to persuade and insist her husband to meet Mr. Bingley.

Q4. "You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves". Explain.

Ans: Mr. Bennet is a lazy and cool minded person and he enjoys harassing his wife. He suggests his wife not to accompany her daughters for she can be chosen for marriage because of her beauty. Mrs. Bennet gets irritated and condemns her husband for making her angry. She further adds that her husband Mr. Bennet is not at all sympathetic to her sensitive feelings regarding the marriage of her daughters.

Q5. Why does Mrs. Bennet think Mrs. Long is selfish?

Mrs. Bennet thinks Mrs. Long is selfish because she has two nieces and she would not lose the chance of marrying one of them to Mr. Bingley. She would also not give Mrs. Bennet any opportunity to marry one of her daughters to the said gentleman.

Q6. How does Mr. Bennet react to the plan designed by his Wife?

Ans: Mr. Bennet does not show any excited reaction towards his wife's plan. He appears to be uninterested in this affair. He teases his wife and does not seem to be serious about this plan at all.

Q7. Why does Mrs. Bennet tell her girls that they have an excellent father?

Ans: Mrs. Bennet and girls get astonished when they come to know that the Mr. Bennet had actually paid the visit to Mr. Bingley for acquaintance. She comes to know that although Mr. Bennet appears to be least interested in the marriage of his daughters, but in the heart of hearts, he really cares for them. Mrs. Bennet is very happy with all this, that is why she tells her daughters, "What an excellent father you have girls".

Q8. Character sketch of Mrs. Bennet:

Ans. Mrs. Bennet is one of the interesting characters in the lesson. She is very different from her husband. While we laugh with Mr. Bennet, we laugh at Mrs. Bennet. Mrs. Bennet is a woman of little intelligence. She has a bad temper. She has never understood husband's character. Even when he teases her, she does not understand it, for instance when he warns her against visiting Mr. Bingley lest he might fall in love with her. Mrs. Bennet takes it in all seriousness. She feels flattered by the reference to her beauty instead of feeling offended by the ridicule. She has only one interest in life. That is getting her daughters married to rich people. For achieving her end she is ready to stoop to any level. She behaves in a funny and

ludicrous way all the time that she becomes almost a comic character. Mrs. Bennet's always complaining about her weak nerves and the indifferent attitude of Mr. Bennet towards important family matters renders her a comic character, when readers know it fully well the real situation. Mrs. Bennet is too much talkative. She cannot keep herself in check. So the character of Mrs. Bennet is a source of entertainment for the readers to a great extent.

Q9. Character sketch of Mr. Bennet:

Ans. Mr. Bennet is a strange mixture of intelligence, humour and reserve. Every word he says is full of wit and humour. Some of the best jokes in the lesson come through his lips. Mr. Bennet is the head of the family. As husband and father he does not assert his authority very much. Instead of preventing follies of his wife he is habitual of amusing himself with them. Mr. Bennet's attitude towards his wife is one of mocking submission. Mrs. Bennet is very talkative by nature. She wants to give detailed reports of all her experiences to her husband. But Mr. Bennet is not in the least interested in listening to her loose talks. For instance when she starts talking about Netherfield Park, Mr. Bennet says, "You want to tell me. I have no objection to hearing it". Mr. Bennet does not like to talk much. When he talks it is mostly for teasing people. The person whom he teases most is his wife. He enjoys at her cost. He has visited the place of Mr. Bingley. But he keeps his visit a secret. He springs surprises at the right moment. We distinguish Mr. Bennet not by his appearance but by his talk. Every sentence he speaks is typical of Mr. Bennet. He leaves a good impression upon the reader.

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

Summary: The poem "When you are old" is a lyric by W. B. Yeats, which is an expression of Yeats' intense emotions. The poem is addressed to Maud Gonne, the poet's beloved. The poet dramatizes his unrequited love by offering a future command for his beloved to take down his book of poems and read it when she becomes very old. He wants his beloved, after she has become 'old and grey and dull of sleep' to read his poems and think about his love for her. The poet leaves no stone unturned to convince his beloved that he loves her from the depths of his heart. The poet is not just fascinated by his beloved's physical charms and

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external beauty that forms the basis of the lover's passion. The poet's love is above all these parameters. Thus one could genuinely find an elegance of spirituality in this poem.

Exercise

Q1. How is the journey from youth to old age described in the poem?

Ans: The journey from youth to old age has been described as a sad one. Youth is the time of beauty, joy and strength. It is the time when one has all the charms and graces. But as we grow old, we become frail. The hair turns grey. All the liveliness and youthful energy vanishes. We feel sleepy and tired all the time. We lose our physical strength and beauty. The deep and dark eyes lose their luster. The old age is full of sorrows. We are left in the lurch by our false admirers. Then we are left alone and the bitterness of life dawns upon us.

Q2. What does the phrase 'full of sleep' mean?

Ans: The phrase 'full of sleep' is a symbol of old age. It means being drowsy and listless all the time. In our old age, we always feel sleepy and tired. The agility of youth remains no longer with us. Life becomes monotonous as we wish to keep sitting down.

Q3. How is the poet's love different from those who also loved his beloved?

Ans: The poet's love is different from others who loved his beloved. The others loved her physical charm and outward appearance. Their love ended as soon as she lost her physical charm/grace. But the poet loves his beloved from the bottom of his heart. His love for her is sincere. He is not just fascinated by her physical charms; but his love is above all these parameters. He loves the holy soul within her. Thus his love is spiritual.

Q4. What is Maud Gonne reminded of in the poem?

Ans: She is reminded that she will realize the worth of the poet's love for her when she becomes old. She will then realize that those who loved her in her youth for physical charms have forsaken her completely. She will then feel sad for the poet whose love she had not requited. Also she is reminded of her youthful beauty when she possessed grace and beauty. Her eyes had an enchantment in them. She is also reminded that she carried a pious soul behind her physical charms.

Q5. 'But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you'. Explain.

Ans: The poet reminds her beloved that there were many who loved her when she was young and beautiful. They loved her outward appearance. Their love was selfish which could not be called love, but lust. The poet tells his beloved that she will realize in her old age the true quality of his love. He loved the pilgrim soul in her. In other words, the poet's love was spiritual in nature. He would love her constantly.

Q6. Write a short paragraph on the emotions portrayed in the poem.

Ans: The poem 'When you are old' is an emotional outburst of the speaker - the poet. The poet has felt sad for not getting his love responded by his beloved. The whole poem is pervaded with melancholy, and it arouses the feeling of pathos. The poet contrasts two kinds of love in the poem. The love based on mere beauty is superficial love and it disappears when the beloved becomes old and grey. But the love of soul i.e. true love remains constant and never changes. The poet expresses the quality of his love for his beloved. It is sincere and from the bottom of his heart. She will realize it when she grows old. Lovers of her physical charm shall leave her. Then she will realize that it was only the poet who loved her

soul. Thus, the poet leaves no stone unturned to convince his beloved that he loves her from the depths of his heart.

Q7. Discuss the 'image' used in the poem: 'When you are old'.

Ans: The poem has been made rich with a number of images. The poem begins with the building up of the image of a lady in old age. She is nodding by the fire. Another image is that of a young and beautiful girl with beautiful eyes and glad grace. The poet has also created an image of fading nature of love. The old lady 'bending down beside the glowing bars' is another image. Likewise 'crowd of stars' is one more image created by the poet.

SPEAK UP

Summary: The poem, *Speak up*, written by Faiz Ahmad Faiz, is the poet's artistic way of encouraging the poor Indians succumbing under British oppression. The poem is addressed to those people who lived a life of fear under the British rule. The poet encourages the people to speak up against oppression. The poet says that the people have lips that are their own. They have soul that is still their own. They have an upright body that is also their own. So they should stand against the colonial oppression. And they should speak boldly against the British rule. Only then they can break the fetters of slavery. Before the time will run out and their body and mind will fade away they should summon up their courage to stand against the cruel.

Q1. The poet instigates the reader to speak up. Why does he do so?

Ans: The poet addresses the people under the yoke of colonial oppression. The poet encourages them to be bold enough to give vent to their resentment against the cruel British rule.

Q2. The poet addresses the reader to come up with the truth. How does he do so?

Ans: The poet wants the reader to have an unwavering faith in truth "for truth is not yet dead". Faiz wants the reader to stand for truth and speak for it.

Q3. How will the chains break?

Ans: All it needs to break the chains is considerable courage and manliness. The chains will break if people refuse to live in them. The chains of oppression will break if people unite and revolt courageously against the cruel rulers.

Q4. Why does the poet urge the reader to speak up now?

Ans: The poet urges the reader to speak up now because he feels it is the proper time to do. As the struggle against the British rule is gaining momentum, people should take advantage of the moment and make the revolt strong enough to make the British flee.

Q5. Do you think "Speak up" is an effort of the poet to give voice to the voiceless? How?

Ans: Yes, the poet wants to give voice to the voiceless. The poet advises the people who are too oppressed to speak up. The poet wants the people to shun all fear and be bold. The poet wants them to realize their potential and right to freedom. So, they must speak up and say what they have to say.

Learning about the literary devices

Metaphor: A thing considered as representative of some other thing.

Q1. What are the metaphors used in the poem?

Ans: The poet uses smithy, the oven, the flames, the padlocks and the fetters as metaphors to describe the struggle for freedom.

Q2. What images does the poet draw from the blacksmith's shop?

Ans: The poet draws very powerful images of a "red oven" and "fierce flames" from the blacksmith's shop to represent the anti-colonial revolution. The images of the melting of old useless things and molding it into something new and useful flash before our mind's eye.

BHOLI

Q1. For what unusual reason is Bholi sent to school?

Ans: When tehsildar inaugurated the school in the village, he urged Ramlal to send his daughters to school to set an example for others. But Ramlal's wife is against sending girls to school. She thinks that there is little chance for girls getting married who go to school. Bholi is mentally a retarded child. She lacks sense. She is not good looking. Her parents send her to school because they feel there is little chance of her getting married.

Q2. How does Bholi find her teacher different from other people?

Ans: - Bholi is a neglected child at home. She is not cared for at home as she is mentally retarded and has ugly black pockmarks on her face. They think her mere a burden. So they neglect her completely. The other children in the house make fun of her. But at school it is quite different. Bholi's teacher gives her all love and affection. She encourages her to speak. She tells her that one day Bholi will be able to speak like anyone else. She also tells her that one day she will become more learned than anyone else in the village. Then nobody will laugh at her. In this way Bholi finds her teacher very kind and sympathetic.

Q3. Why do Bholi's parents accept Bishamber's marriage proposal?

Ans: Bishamber is a rich man. He owns a big shop, a house and a lot of wealth. Bholi is a simpleton. She doesn't have sense. She is ugly too. She has pockmarks on her face. Her parents have apprehension that nobody will marry her because of her ugly look. When Bishamber proposes to marry her, Bholi's parents consider it a golden opportunity for her. They fear that if they don't accept Bishamber's proposal, she may remain unmarried all her life. Another reason for accepting the proposal is that Bishamber does not ask for any dowry.

Q4. The ending of the story is very dramatic. Do you think her decision not to marry Bishamber makes her an outcast /rebellious or is it an assertion of her being an individual and a woman of substance?

Ans: The ending of the story is unmistakably dramatic. Bholi's parents have been much worried about her marriage since her childhood because she has pockmarks all over her face. They think nobody will marry her. They send her to school for an unusual reason. A middle aged man, Bishamber proposes to marry Bholi. But at the time of marriage, Bishamber demands a dowry of five thousand rupees. Bholi's father places his turban at Bishamber's feet. But Bishamber is adamant.

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Bholi refuses to marry Bishamber whom she calls a greedy and mean person. She decides to serve her parents in their old age. This shows that Bholi is a girl of great courage and confidence. She is not ready to suffer any disgrace or injustice. Thus, her refusal to marry Bishamber is an assertion of her being an individual and a woman of substance. Her teacher had changed her into a masterpiece of courage and confidence. She is not a 'dumb cow' anymore.

Q5. Bholi's real name is Sulekha. We are told this right at the beginning, but only in the last but one paragraph of the story is Bholi called Sulekha again. Why do you think she is called Sulekha at that point in the story?

Ans. Bholi's real name was Sulekha. When she was ten months old, she had fallen off the cot on her head and it had damaged some part of her brain. As a result, she remained a mentally backward child. That is why she was called Bholi, the simpleton. She was sent to school. At the school, the teacher showered her kindness and affection on her. She encouraged her. She filled her with confidence. Now she was no longer a girl who lacked sense. She was wise, confident, courageous and self respecting. That is why in the end of the story; she is referred to by her real name, Sulekha not Bholi, the simpleton.

Additional Questions

Q1. Character sketch of 'Bholi'.

Ans. Bholi's real name was Sulekha. As ill luck would have been it, she fell off the cot when she was only ten months old. It damaged a part of her brain. As a consequence, she was mentally retarded. She lacked sense, and hence came to be known as Bholi, the simpleton. At home the other children made a mock of her for stammering. As a result of it she talked very little. She felt scared. She was like a 'dumb cow'. She was completely neglected at home and being very timid, she never revolted. But a dramatic change occurred in her after she was sent to school. Because of the sympathetic and kind treatment of her teacher, her heart was filled with a new hope and a new life. She regained confidence and courage. She was no longer a 'dumb cow'. She was turned into a brave and bold woman. She was now a woman of substance. We see this when Bholi refuses to marry a mean and greedy person like Bishamber. She would no longer bear any disgrace or injustice. Thus, she came up to the expectations of her teacher.

Q2. Character sketch of Bholi's parents.

Ans. Bholi's parents were well-to-do. In their household there was plenty to eat and drink. Ramlal was a revenue official. They took good care of their healthy children, but were very unkind to Bholi. Though they were anxious about Bholi's marriage, they never tried to provide her with such things which would have made her marriageable. They had lost hope in her. They never thought about the remedy to her ills. They never troubled themselves to encourage her and spoke kindly to her. Their ill-treatment made her life more miserable. If they had loved and encouraged Bholi, the condition could have been different. They were old-fashioned and blind followers of tradition. They thought that nobody marries the girls

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who have been to school. They had not the courage to stand up against bad customs of the society.

Q3. Character sketch of 'Bishamber'.

Ans. Bishamber was a middle aged grocer. He walked with a limp. He was a well to do man. He was a widower and had grown-up children from his first wife. Even then Bholi's parents accepted his marriage proposal. They had their own reasons for it. He was a prosperous person and was not demanding dowry. But at the time of marriage, seeing the pockmarks on Bholi's face, he started demanding a big dowry. In this way his mean nature instantly surfaced. He wanted to blackmail the situation. In spite of the pitiable pleadings by Bholi's father, this mean fellow refused to budge. He cannot be called a human being. He was a crooked and crude person. He was greedy and mean. He had no sense of respect of others. He was harbouring a callous heart that was empty of human feelings.

Q4. Character of 'Bholi's teacher.

Ans. The teacher was a very kind and sympathetic person. She knew her profession quite well. She gave right education to her pupils. She worked with patience. She played a crucial role in Bholi's life. Bholi could not talk. She was shy and lacked confidence. But when she was sent to school her teacher gave her all love and affection. She filled her heart with a new hope. She encouraged her to learn. She boosted her confidence. Finally, she was successful in carving out her masterpiece of courage and outspoken personality in the form of Bholi.

Q5. Theme of the story.

Ans. The story 'Bholi' has many themes. But the main motif of the story is role of education in a person's life. It depicts how education boosts one's confidence and makes one outspoken. Education changes the way of thinking of a person. Bholi was an outcast because of her lack of sense and ugly face. She could not talk properly. She was scared and bore everything without resistance. She was sent to school. Her teacher treated her with love and affection. She encouraged her to learn. She guided her properly. She filled her mind with wisdom and, as a result of this education, Bholi turned into a woman of substance. She became brave and courageous. She had now courage to rise against the injustice in society.